

The Bloomfield Record.

The Boy with White Hair.

His hair wasn't white—not exactly the color of pastry flour, but a cursory glance would have marked it down in a stranger's mental memorandum-book as white. He had a hatchet-like face. It was not a face exactly like a hatchet, but it was a long face and a thin one, and was wider at the eyes than at the chin. There were freckles on his nose, a few distributed over his cheeks, and there was an honest, truthful look in his large blue eyes. A mental inventory of the boy would have read:

"Some wandering, homeless lad, determined that the world owes him a living; not a bad boy, as boys run, but yet prepared to make the most of favorable circumstances."

He boarded the boat just as she was swinging clear, and he nodded familiarly to the captain, smiled tenderly at the clerk, and carried the air of one who had paid his fare and plenty of money left, though, truthfully speaking, he hadn't seen a shipplaster in his own fingers for days and days.

Sauntering into the cabin, he selected a victim. It is not necessary that white-haired boys should have victims, but this one walked across the cabin, and seated himself beside an aged female. She was a female with two satchels and a parcel. She had spectacles on; her hair was bordering on the gray; she had just regaled her nose with a liberal pinch of black snuff—soft, balmy snuff, scented with cinnamon oil to enhance its natural flavor.

"Never on a boat before, I see?" he remarked as he gave her a searching yet innocent look.

"Lots o' times," she replied, returning his look without finching, as if she believed him a sharper and meant to bluff him at the very start.

"I thought not; else you wouldn't be seated here right over the bilers and them firemen chucking in lard and taller and kerosene oil to get steam enough to catch the other boat!" he replied.

She gave a little start, looked hurriedly around, and there was a little smile in the corner of his left eye as he noticed how the arrow had struck the target.

"Then it ain't safe here!" she asked.

"It may be, but—but—"

His hesitation decided her. Rising up and seizing her satchels and the parcel, she vacated the cabin for the promenade deck, where she secured a seat on a hard stool and raised her blue parasol to keep off the sun. She was thankful for the boy's warning, and she blamed herself for not opening the parcel and offering him a doughnut, a boiled egg, and a taste from the tumbler of jelly.

A quarter of an hour had passed, and she was feeling very comfortable, when the boy with white hair put in an appearance. His face did not look solemn; it did not betray mirth; but there was deep concern in his tones as he halted and exclaimed:

"What! you here!"

"Isn't this a safe place?" she anxiously asked.

"Why, madam, you are in the centre of the boat almost, and in case of a bust the boat always breaks in two near the centre!"

He passed on, and she lifted up the two satchels and the parcel and walked aft, getting as near the stern of the boat as she could. Her heart swelled a little as she thought of the boy's disinterested kindness toward a stranger—a lone woman, who might never have returned from her trip but for the unexpected interest of a forlorn orphan boy. She was wondering if the boy wouldn't like to be adopted when he reappeared, drew up a stool, and calmly said:

"I have been through three or four explosions, and I tell you they are awful! Last boat I was on exploded both boilers at once, and yet only one old man was killed. He was sitting at the stern of the boat, just about where you are now!"

"Good stars! but I thought I was safe here!" she exclaimed, reaching down for the satchels.

"If the end of one of the bilers should blow out it would strike you exactly on the chest!" he coolly continued, "and there wouldn't be a piece of your body that I couldn't put into this tin tobacco-box!"

He suddenly became interested in a passing steamer, slipped away, and she lifted her bundles and walked to the other end of the boat. She had come aboard with full confidence that the trip would be pleasantly made, and she wondered how the public—the free american people—could calmly permit a boat to leave port laden with human beings who might be torn to fragments any moment by an explosion. She was wishing that she had taken the cars, when the boy with white hair sat down beside her and softly began:

"You know that every biler has two ends. If you were aft and that end blew out you would be torn to strips. If you are here, and this end blows out, no one will ever be able to recover a relic of you—not even your spectacles!"

"Then I ain't safe yet!" she gasped.

"In the midst of life we are in death!" he solemnly replied. "You may be safe, but I will not assume the fearful responsibility of saying so!"

She gathered up the satchels and the parcels, entered the cabin, looked all around, and finally sat down in a chair behind a door. The boy with white hair found her again after awhile. She had almost fallen asleep, but his exclamation speedily aroused her:

"What! behind the door—right over the larboard steam-chest!"

"Ain't this safe, either?" she gasped.

"Madam, ten steam-chests explode to every one biler, and statistics prove it. The pieces tear and grind and splinter and kill in an awful manner. You can sit there if you wish, but—but—"

And he went down-stairs, and I saw her come out on the promenade deck and look up at the smoke-stacks to see if there wasn't a safe spot up there somewhere.

A Text worthy of daily remembrance is, "He that contemeth small things shall fall little by little." Could not many an unsuccessfull person look back and see that it has been the neglecting of small things that has caused the want of success? Unwise words, thoughtlessly spoken and forgotten by a wife, may be working the ruin of her husband and family. "So-and-so is in sad trouble," was said the other day, and the reply was, "Yes, but it was the foolish gossiping of his wife that brought it on." She had forgotten the importance of these small things called words, and had wrought irreparable mischief. The same was unwise or not strictly correct actions; their importance may be for a time slurred over because they are not very palpably wrong, yet the continuance in them may some day prove them to be the little and little that imperceptibly worked ruin.

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